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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the integration of four research projects that focus on educational leadership in El Paso, Texas. Each study raised the following critical issue: It is widely recognized that the quality of school leadership correlates with the quality of a particular campus's educational activities. However, traditional methods of leadership development tend to focus on formal input from recognized "experts," which tends to silence other voices interested in how principals should perform their jobs. To investigate this issue, focus groups and one-on-one semistructured interviews were employed. Three focus groups were conducted for parents, three for middle- and high-school students, and three for teachers. All participants were residents or employees in one of the large urban school districts in El Paso. One-on-one, semistructured interviews were also conducted with six school-board members, two from each of three large urban school districts in the area. Results unveiled common themes regarding the desired attributes for effective principals. In general, school-board members valued the technical skills emphasized in principal-preparation programs, but parents, teachers, and students emphasized relationships over managerial skills, citing effective communication techniques as the avenue principals should use to strengthen bonds among stakeholders. Contains 27 references. (RJM)

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Effective School Leadership Attributes: Voices from the Field

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Effective School Leadership Attributes: Voices From the Field

Introduction

Schools are multi-faceted organizations. Achieving and sustaining high quality instruction within such a complex environment demands that the principal, as school leader, possess a wide range of leadership capabilities. Current research continually points to the behavior of educational leaders as one of the most critical factors supporting high quality school programs (Daresh, 1991). The principal is a key figure in setting the tone and direction of the school.

Increasingly, people are recognizing that if educational leaders are to better serve schools and students in our rapidly changing society, the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they possess must be different than those reflected in traditional educational administration curricula (Daresh & Barnett, 1993). Consequently, educational administration preparation programs need to change--they need to become more reflective of the roles campus leaders play. In order to do this, we must better understand school leadership. As Milstein (1993) asserts, "[This]...calls for a reconceptualization of how educational leaders are prepared" (p. vii).

In 1994, the Texas State Board of Education adopted the strategy of *Learner-Centered Schools for Texas*.[1] The document delineates the critical proficiencies required of administrators in their preparation for professional practice. The proficiencies are grouped into the following six categories:

- Learner-Centered Leadership
- Learner-Centered Climate
- Learner-Centered Curriculum and Instruction
- Learner-Centered Professional Development
- Equity in Excellence for All Learners
- Learner-Centered Communication

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[1] A seventh administrator proficiency, *Learner-Centered Management*, was added by the Texas Legislature in 1998.

The sixth proficiency, *Learner-Centered Communication*, states that the administrator should effectively communicate the learning community's vision as well as its policies and successes in interaction with staff, students, parents, community members, and the media. With pressure to improve schools building from all segments of society, it appears obvious that all stakeholders have a vested interest in the preparation of effective school leaders (Erlandson, 1997), and their input would add to the current knowledge base underpinning effective administrative practice in education.

Subchapter J of the Texas Education Code delineates requirements for masters/certification programs in educational leadership. It calls for the broad involvement of "expert" stakeholders in program development; interestingly, though, it does not mandate that students and others outside the school be consulted as to their preferences and perceptions regarding the preparation of school leaders. This is unfortunate, for much good can come from interacting with all those concerned with educational excellence. Short, Short, and Brinson (1998) note the following:

> Parents, students, and community members are excellent sources of information. Particularly when decisions to be made are concerned with perceptions, attitudes, and values stakeholders are important information sources...An additional benefit of collecting information from the community, parents, and students is that it creates the impression of openness to their ideas, opinions, and suggestions. Used this way, information collection can create a positive climate and increase stakeholder investment in the decision-making process (pp. 120-121).

Since school leaders must develop proficiency in coalition building, these researchers believe it only prudent to seek the thoughts and concerns of key stakeholders in order to strengthen leadership programs.

Cultural Context

El Paso, Texas, and its surrounding communities is part of a rapidly growing binational, bicultural community. With a population of more than 700,000, it is the fourth largest city in Texas, and is one of the state's fastest growing metropolitan areas. Together with Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, directly across the Rio Grande (population of over 1.2 million), the two communities create a binational metropolis of approximately two million people.

El Paso is at the forefront of demographic trends that are rapidly changing the face of US society. The city's population is currently estimated to be 70 percent Hispanic, 23 percent non-Hispanic white, 4 percent African-American, 1 percent Asian, and 2 percent "other." Almost one-fourth of El Paso's population is foreign born, and over 50 percent of the region's households speak Spanish as the primary language. In addition, an estimated 30 percent of the adult population is functionally illiterate. El Paso is one of the poorest metropolitan regions in the United States (Parra & Daresh, 1997).

If regional school leaders are to meet the challenge of teaching the children from this diverse area, the university principal preparation program must acknowledge the importance of interacting with all stakeholders who are concerned with local public education. The goal of this paper, then, is to address the data collected from four important groups of stakeholders (parents, students, teachers, and school board members), groups with vested interests in the quality of our region's educational services.

Problem Statement

This paper discusses the integration of four research projects which focus collectively on the same topic. The critical issue raised throughout each study is as follows: It is widely recognized that the quality of school leadership has an enormous impact on the quality of a particular campus's educational activities. However, traditional methods of constructing frameworks to guide leadership development tend to focus on formal input from recognized "experts" in the field--namely administrators, professors, and policy

makers. While their input is essential, other voices with a vested interest in how principals should approach their jobs are typically absent from discussions concerning "ideal" school leadership qualities and proficiencies.

Epstein (1991) acknowledges vast gaps in our knowledge regarding parental input which can only be filled with rigorous research. Students, rarely thought of as participants in the process of change and organizational life, are an extremely important stakeholder group (1992, Fullan & Miles, as cited in Boccia, 1997). Teachers resent being subject to educational policies devised by school leaders without having a voice in their formulation (Sarason, 1995), and school board members are referred to as "the forgotten players on the educational team" (Danzberger, et al., 1987). This study, therefore, was initiated to give voice to the silence--to provide a forum for stakeholders whose opinions regarding school leadership development have traditionally been neglected.

Methodology

Two data gathering techniques, focus groups and one-on-one semi-structured interviews, were employed in this multiple project study. Focus groups were used with parents, students, and teachers in the El Paso region. The group interview process is valued for its synergistic effect, such that respondents stimulate one another's thoughts and build on one another's comments. Participants have freedom to wander with their answers, provided they stay within the structural framework of the broadly based queries. This procedure allows for the emergence of data which might not come forth if questions are more direct, and yet, the discussion remains focused to the researcher's area of interest.

Inherent in the philosophy of one-on-one interviewing is the belief that understanding is achieved when people are encouraged to describe their worlds in their own terms (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 1-5). The researchers believed that school board members would refrain from sharing freely in a focus group setting, thus, one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with six board members from three large urban school districts in El Paso (two participants from each district). The private interview

setting hopefully encouraged more candid responses from these board members who daily operate in politically sensitive surroundings.

Sampling

Three focus groups were conducted for parents, three for middle and high school students, and three for teachers (a total of nine sessions). All participants (parents, teachers, and students) were residents or employees in one of the large, urban school districts in El Paso, Texas. Purposive sampling using predetermined criteria produced a pool of potential subjects able to contribute to the research study (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996). Selection criteria included a broad range of socioeconomic levels, ethnicities, language preference, and school programs, with efforts made to engage participants holding differing opinions in order to ensure multiple perspectives of the principal's role. An interpreter attended each parental focus group session in order to translate for those participants more comfortable expressing themselves in Spanish. Simultaneous translations provided both English and Spanish speaking parents the ability to communicate with one another throughout the focus group sessions.

One-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with six school board members, two from each of three large urban school districts in El Paso. Participants were selected purposefully in an attempt to balance ethnicity, gender, levels of expertise, and years of experience in the position. One unanticipated limitation of the purposive sampling process proved to be gaining access to the board members themselves. Because of the political nature of their positions and their relationships with district superintendents, the investigator interacted only with the president and vice-president of each school board.

The researchers surmised that participants' varied positions, ethnic groups, and socioeconomic levels might result in dissimilar perspectives regarding the valued characteristics of effective school leaders, for it is not unusual for divergent stakeholders to disagree about purposes, goals, and means for attaining these goals. The triangulation of sources (parents, students, teachers, and school board members) in this study should help

guard against the accusation that the research findings were simply an artifact of speaking to like stakeholders (Patton, 1990).

Instrumentation

The focus group interview guides used with the parents, students, and teachers and the one-on-one semi-structured interview questions for the school board members were derived from the *Learner Centered Proficiencies for Administrators* adopted by the Texas State Board of Education in 1994 (TEA, 1995).

Institutional Approval for Research

Project approval by The University of Texas at El Paso's Office of Research and Sponsored Projects and its Institutional Review Board was required, due to the fact that human subjects were involved, and because the focus group sessions and one-on-one interviews were audio-taped. Parental consent for students was required since all were minors. All participants were provided complete explanations of the project, letters of informed consent, and assurances of confidentiality. In addition, approval was also obtained from the school districts' research and evaluation offices.

Data Analysis

Using the framework of the Texas *Learner-Centered Proficiencies,* the data were coded according to those proficiencies which produced the best fit. Many times the data were appropriately placed into more than one category, for much overlap was found among the proficiencies of *Leadership, Climate,* and *Communication.*

The data were examined in two cycles. First they were coded for the six learner-centered proficiencies and examined for trends within each group (parents, students, teachers, and school board members). Subsequently, the researchers examined the data across categories and across the groups. Data displays and matrices were developed to illuminate patterns and to aid interpretation of the multiple stakeholder perceptions on school leadership (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Results

The results in this section of the paper are grouped according to the six Texas *Administrators' Learner-Centered Proficiencies* (leadership, climate, curriculum and instruction, professional development, equity, and communication). Data matrices for each category display the overarching sentiment for each stakeholder group within the proficiency.

Common themes emerged as participants expressed their views regarding the desired attributes for effective principals. In general, the technical skills traditionally emphasized in principal preparation programs were highly valued by school board members, but of lesser importance to the other stakeholder groups in this study. Parents, teachers, and students emphasized relationships over managerial skills, citing effective communication techniques as the avenue principals should use to strengthen bonds between and among groups of people. They believe that leadership characteristics such as visibility, compassion, trustworthiness, respect, and integrity are the building blocks which will foster effective working relationships within schools.

Leadership

This domain charges the administrator to maximize learning for all students "through inspiring leadership." Professional ethics and personal integrity are included here as the administrator is enjoined to exhibit and encourage the highest standard of professional conduct and to base daily decisions on ethical principles (TEA, 1995).

Parents are interested in developing and supporting principals, with the ultimate aim of creating more vibrant and exciting schools for their children. They want strong leaders for their children's schools and dislike "wishy-washy" decision-making. They want leaders who will stand up for what is right, be willing to take "the flak," and be a "pillar of strength" for their school community, such that children can look to the principal as a role model. Students appreciate administrators who are both willing and capable of sharing leadership in the school, while teachers value the principal who can be trusted and

respected. School board members look to power relationships outside the traditional campus environment as a strength on which campus leaders need to capitalize. They asserted that campus principals do not involve themselves enough in the political process to get the things they need. This study, then, found that each stakeholder group wants to participate in the democratic revitalization of our society through interaction with school leaders, leaders who appreciate management as a moral and ethical undertaking.

Data Matrix 1: Leadership

Learner-Centered Leadership: Through inspiring leadership, the administrator maximizes learning for all students while maintaining professional ethics and personal integrity.	
Parents	"I don't want a fence-sitter, in either a teacher or an administrator...I want an administrator who has the moral courage to say, 'This is the way we're going to do it, day after day, this is what is expected,' and the kids know and the teachers know."
Students	"...She [principal] wouldn't try to do everything. She always tried to get involvement from the students, parents, and teachers. She tried to get everyone to work together."
Teachers	"It goes with credibility, it really does. You have to lead by example...leadership skills [are often not the problem]. Ethics and credibility [can be] big problems."
School Board	"Campus administrators should be friends with city councilmen; they should know the power brokers--that's the way to get in touch with a variety of resources."

Climate

This domain calls for the establishment of a climate of mutual trust and respect in order to enable all members of the school community to seek and attain excellence. It calls for "an atmosphere of openness" (TEA, 1995).

To date, one voice not typically heard in principal preparation programs is that of the student. In the past, the student perspective lacked sufficient clout to be viewed as a viable factor in the decision-making process, although reformers have generally recommended greater student involvement in educational decision-making. As a result, students are an often underutilized source of valuable perceptions principals could use to better understand their youngest constituents. Students want principals who are visible and accessible, who truly listen to them, and who act on their input and suggestions when

appropriate. Students want campus administrators to be aware that they possess leadership capabilities, and that given the opportunity, students could guide school improvement in ways far beyond their current functions as bake-sale organizers, student council members, and cheerleaders. Listening to the student voice, then, is critical to developing a positive campus culture.

Both parents and teachers emphasized positive relationships and the need for principals to build trust with their constituents. Responses from all the focus group sessions paralleled the research of Kouzes and Posner (1993) who address the issue of trust when advising leaders to attend to the following leadership attributes: (1) predictable, consistent behavior, (2) clear, careful statements, (3) promises seriously made and seriously taken, and (4) honesty.

Again and again, parents referred to the ideal principal as one who would get out of the office, interact, and listen to students, teachers, and parents. The frustration of one parent was particularly noticeable as she remarked, "I've never even seen our principal. If you put [that person] in a line-up, I wouldn't even know who it was! How can you get to know them [principals] if they don't make themselves available?" (Gantner, 1998, p. 20). Echoing the parents' sentiments, teachers in this study found the visibility of the principal to be both helpful and nonthreatening, especially when they received feedback after classroom visits. They found the principal's classroom "walk-throughs" particularly motivating to try new teaching strategies. In their words, "[We love having our principal] coming around to see what we're doing" (Newsom, 1998, p. 13).

School board members viewed the building climate as something largely determined by the leadership of the principal and the teachers' interactions. They were aware of the importance of the following on school climate: (1) getting people to feel good about themselves, (2) setting an expectation of professionalism, (3) visibility on campus, (4) interacting with students, (5) supporting teachers, and (6) demonstrating a sense of humor. They were also concerned with the physical environment of the school facilities, safety and

discipline issues, and the correlation between a positive environment and student achievement.

Data Matrix 2: Climate

Learner-Centered Climate: The administrator establishes a climate of mutual trust and respect which enables all members of the learning community to seek and attain excellence.	
Parents	"I want a principal who has understanding and compassion...who will be kind to students...sensitive to students' needs and take care of all of them."
Students	"I think I get along with [administrators] that don't treat me like I'm three...to get respect as a principal, you have to give respect...I think you can have professionalism and still be friendly."
Teachers	"During the first couple days of school, the administrators...visited each classroom and introduced themselves...to [make] students feel welcome...[From the beginning] they were in open communication with the faculty and students."
School Board	"The environment should permeate with the importance of each individual. If the teachers, principal, and staff value learning, the students will tend to do so as well."

Curriculum & Instruction

This domain instructs the administrator to facilitate implementation of a sound curriculum and appropriate instructional strategies for the optimal learning of all students (TEA, 1995).

School board members, parents, and students viewed the development of curriculum, for the most part, as a matter legitimately delegated to professional staff (i.e., teachers and principals). Parents in this study did not voice great interest in determining precise content of the curriculum, other than stating that principals should ensure children are taught "the basics" and that administrators should actively keep their teaching skills up-to-date. Students zeroed in on pedagogical issues, emphasizing their desire that principals support teachers as they experiment with a variety of instructional techniques in the classroom. They also pointed out that course content should be relevant to their lives and their futures, making reference to the narrowing influence TAAS (*Texas Assessment of Academic Skills*, the state standardized achievement test) has upon the curriculum. School board members directed their remarks regarding curriculum content to the issue of "standards," expecting principals to ensure authentic assessment of student work such that

grades reflect the true performance of their students. Teachers were adamant in their belief that the main responsibility for curriculum and instruction belongs to them, that they should make the decisions which directly impact teaching and learning in their classrooms, and that the principal's function should be one of providing access to available resources.

Data Matrix 3: Curriculum & Instruction

Learner-Centered Curriculum & Instruction: The administrator facilitates the implementation of a sound curriculum and appropriate instructional strategies designed to promote optimal learning for all students.	
Parents	"The principal should be the instructional leader of the school. He or she should be capable of walking into a teacher's classroom and teaching the lesson if necessary."
Students	"The principal talked to us [students] about changes he wanted to make...but I noticed they [administrators] only talked about programs dealing with how...to help people who are failing and not passing TAAS...No one wanted to bring up that the rest [of the student body] seems to be ignored. A lot of programs...they wanted to implement dealt specifically with TAAS, but if you've already passed it, then too bad for you."
Teachers	"...as professionals, we should make the decision as to how to use the [curriculum] information we receive...that is the big responsibility that lies with us as teachers...the responsibility for the leader is to keep us informed because we don't have the time to [examine] all of the latest research..."
School Board	"Reading, writing, and math...that's important. However, so are leadership skills...experiential learning should be at the forefront of instruction."

Professional Development

Fostering the professional development of all staff is the mandate of this domain (TEA, 1995). Teachers want principals to work with them to determine the best professional development opportunities to meet both campus and individual faculty needs. Students want campus administrators to remember what it's like to be a student, and to insist that teachers vary their pedagogical techniques and stay abreast of fresh, crisp material. Parents wondered why there should even be a question of professional development for administrators; after all, other professions value and require it...why shouldn't educational leaders?

School board members advocated continual learning for principals, emphasizing their concern that most future administrators graduate from university principal preparation

programs without the necessary political and financial management skills needed to effectively lead a campus. School board members remarked that a variety of community resources are available to schools, but many principals fail to take advantage of those possibilities...suggesting that the business community could play a role in filling this gap in the campus leader's knowledge base through professional development sessions.

Table 4: Professional Development

Learner-Centered Professional Development: The administrator demonstrates a commitment to student learning through a personal growth plan and fosters the professional development of all staff in the learning community.	
Parents	"Teachers and administrators should never surrender their student ID card. The second you surrender your ID card and say, 'I've learned all I'm going to learn...I have arrived,' you are in trouble. We've got to keep learning."
Students	"[For a professional development session, let the administrators] take our place as students. Put them in a strict, fifty minute class, where the door is shut exactly at the bell. They have three minutes to get to class. Morning classes should follow a strict lecture format; afternoon classes should be group activities...I'm not saying one way is better than the other, I just want them to understand [how different ways of teaching affect us]."
Teachers	"If anyone would know what we [teachers] need...it's the principal. Not the region, not the district...not a blanket professional development [session], because we have very different needs. So let us say what we think we need, and let the administrators see if they can go about getting it for us..."
School Board	"Business ought to play a bigger role in the preparation process."

Equity

This domain requires the administrator to promote "equity in excellence," through acknowledgment, respect, and response to diversity among students and staff (TEA, 1995). Principals who sustain a dialogue with their multiple constituencies become partners in creating conditions which foster and encourage student success. In the voice of one school board member, "I feel we learn more when we are forced out of our comfort zone--when we are made to deal with people with different beliefs, thoughts, and actions than ourselves. We become richer people because of it" (Dunlap, 1998, p. 40).

Parents responded to the equity proficiency in ways that again pointed out the need for sensitive and caring attitudes. Language preference and ethnic background, in the

parents' view, had no bearing on the fostering of caring relationships. For example, when Spanish speaking parents were asked if they preferred a principal of Hispanic descent, one threw her hands in the air and cried in exasperation, "No, that's not what's important!" Others joined in immediately, confirming that the crucial issue was neither ethnicity nor language, but the ability of the principal to nurture and care for their children. Anglo[2] parents agreed with these Hispanic parents that ethnicity should not be an issue. While the Anglos thought that a principal's ability to speak Spanish would be helpful, they were adamant that it not be a requirement since that would preclude talented potential leaders from entering the administrative pool. Spanish speaking parents agreed, saying they were accustomed to working through translators and that they themselves were making an effort to learn English.

Teachers' discussions of equity centered mostly around the principal selection process. Concerns about the ethnicity of educational leaders regularly make headlines in El Paso newspapers; however, teachers reacted strongly to this issue by stating that their schools need, first and foremost, "the best principal for the job," not necessarily a principal belonging to a particular ethnic group. In the opinion of teachers, a principal addresses the equity proficiency when the school makes an effort to meet the needs of all students.

From the students' point of view, principals ensure equity when they purposefully converse with all types of students on the campus. They are suspicious of principals who choose representatives for their advisory councils only from the "in" groups (student council, cheerleaders, National Honor Society officers, and so forth). Students want principals to look beyond outward appearances, to search for talent in those teen-agers who don't readily participate, and to develop the latent potential in all students. In other words, they want principals to be sensitive to the feelings of all students, regardless of race, culture, extracurricular participation, or academic performance.

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[2] "Anglo" is the term used in the El Paso region to describe persons who are "white, of non-Hispanic origin."

School board members examined the equity issue in terms of the distribution of material resources. They struggled to find a balance between fairness and genuine need. In the words of one school board member, "We would like to be able to send the most resources to the campuses that are most in need; however, it is difficult to justify giving more to one school over another. The public perception of that action is one of favoritism" (Dunlap, 1998).

Table 5: Equity

Learner-Centered Equity: The administrator promotes equity in excellence for all by acknowledging, respecting, and responding to diversity among students and staff while building on shared values and other similarities that bond all people.	
Parents	"[The principal's academic] expectations must be the same. To expect anything less of a child who is Anglo, or Hispanic, or Black, or Vietnamese is inappropriate because children and people learn expectations and conform to expectations...We need to be tolerant of varied backgrounds, but not be so aware of it that we look for expected behaviors."
Students	"...in El Paso you have a mixed population...therefore, they [principals] have to be sensitive to everybody's feelings."
Teachers	"It is a very simple question. Do you want the best person for the job...there isn't a person or parent in this school who will say that they do not want the best principal for my child or the best teacher for my child."
School Board	"I believe you give more [resources] to those who need more...It all depends on your definition of need. You have to maintain a balance."

Communication

This domain calls for the principal to effectively communicate in interactions with all members of the school community and the media (TEA, 1995).

Parents appreciate principals who take the time to communicate honestly with them and to make them feel that their children are the number one concern of the administrator. Students appreciate campus leaders who make an effort to say "hello," who develop relationships with students such that they are knowledgeable of their activities, accomplishments, and frustrations. Teachers want principals who make it a point to be accessible, who use "management by walking around" to cultivate the teacher-administrator relationship.

School board members believe principals should acquire skills to work with special interest groups, particularly the media (televisions, radio, and print); however, they recognize the difficult nature of this charge. In the words of one board member, "The media has the perfect opportunity to instill the importance of education in the minds of all people...however, the media does not portray education accurately. They tend to sensationalize...because that sells newspapers."

Table 6: Communication

Learner-Centered Communication: The administrator effectively communicates the learning community's vision as well as its policies and successes in interaction with staff, students, parents, community members, and the media.	
Parents	"The only time I would ever call the principal would be...over a problem...and [if] I do not get a quick response...that's the most important thing in my day. What happens to my child or what I'm concerned about as a parent is absolutely at the top of my list. It can't be that to the principal, but most parents don't see that. [It gets] back to those interpersonal communication skills again."
Students	"...I think [administrators] should actually...listen to [students]. The principal could learn from them what s/he could be doing better. I said something once and it seemed I was kind of passed off. It was like, 'Yeah, but we have more important things to worry about.'"
Teachers	"It is very important that you feel your principal is accessible. You feel that when you see them out, they are walking around...stopping by the room...'Good morning'...'How are things going?'...it opens doors for you."
School Board	"The media shapes the perception of the district in the eyes of the public."

Discussion

Common themes emerged as parents expressed their views regarding the desired characteristics of principals who work with their children. The technical skills traditionally emphasized in principal preparation programs were of small importance to these parents. Most parents, regardless of their socioeconomic status, ethnicity, or language preference, described the need for school leaders to demonstrate sensitivity and caring on a continual basis when dealing with children at all age levels. Parents rated human relationship skills as paramount.

Students' concerns closely mirrored the parents' views regarding school leadership characteristics: students want principals who exhibit caring attitudes. The need for

interpersonal skills (fairness, ability to communicate, and so forth) expressed by parents and teachers was also mentioned repeatedly by students. They emphasized characteristics associated with "the principal as instructional leader," although couched in lay terminology. This was an expected result, due to the amount of time students spend in classrooms and the fact that the quality of instruction directly impacts their learning experiences. Few comments by students focused on the technical, managerial competencies of a principal's job--possibly due to students' limited ability to grasp the complexities involved in directing a large organization.

Teachers assumed that building administrators have a degree of skill in carrying out the technical side of their jobs, and did not express great concern with respect to the management functions of the building leader--unless they were directly impacted by a principal's inability to perform those duties. On the other hand, teachers viewed the human relations skills of an administrator as crucial. They specifically focused on the following issues as critical to a principal's ability to serve the school well: (1) the school administrator must be both trustworthy and respectable, (2) the principal must communicate effectively with teachers, and (3) the campus leader should work to provide relevant professional development for the faculty (i.e., strengthen the professional climate of the campus).

Contrary to parental, student, and teacher views regarding school leadership preparation, school board members believed it was more important for principals to possess skills in sound management practices. It should be noted that board members had the greatest difficulty of all stakeholder groups in describing the specific activities principals engage in on a daily basis. These researchers believe that if school board members could gain a more accurate picture of the reality of the principalship, they could, in turn, actively develop policies which could clarify and improve the campus leadership role.

Limitations

It should be noted that this study did not attempt to address problems correlated with stakeholder participation in the governance of schools (another study in itself). When

inviting parents, students, and teachers to engage in functional school leadership, principals must develop strategies to work with unreasonable constituents. In addition, administrators need to work out how best to invite student contributions to the school's leadership culture, while maintaining appropriate structures for authority. Before principals solicit stakeholders as partners in the larger, more meaningful school reform process, they must be somewhat assured that they're not adding an additional "headache," not worth their time and effort. It is critical that clearly articulated benefits for stakeholders and school administrators be evident in these new partnerships. These collaborations must be carefully thought through, communication must occur in both directions, and respect for one another's concerns and ideas must be well established.

The very idea of opening the schoolhouse doors and inviting a myriad of voices to participate in school governance is, in itself, a daunting concept. The results of this preliminary study confirm that shared governance is desired by those groups most affected by school leadership...parents, students, and teachers, and certainly expected by school board members. A natural, follow-up research question to this study would inquire, "How best do we begin the process of articulating strategies for successful collaboration between the principal and the multiple constituencies with which s/he interacts on a daily basis?"

Readers should also be cautious about generalizing these findings to populations beyond the El Paso area. More work needs to be done to determine if, indeed, the concerns and emphases of these local stakeholder groups simulate those in cities farther from the US-Mexico border. However, the results of this study were consistent enough that these researchers believe them valid for use by the principal preparation program at The University of Texas at El Paso.

Conclusion

Americans have always believed that education is too important to relegate to a cadre of "experts." They have consistently embraced the concept of the "aroused citizenry" which can powerfully influence public policy (Bierlein, 1993). Educators would benefit

from appreciating these stakeholder groups as a valuable resource--and, if skillfully cultivated--their talents and energy can help transform American public schools.

Reform measures of the early 1980s focused on the "quick fix" through top-down mandates; however, the top-down measures which work well in highly structured organizations with clear-cut goals and objectives, fail miserably when applied to loosely coupled organizations, of which schools are an example (Weick, 1976). When organizations are characterized by "messiness," complexity, and serving a multitude of constituencies, the technical approach employed by most managers is woefully insufficient.

This study illustrates the need for university principal preparation programs to focus more attention on teaching future leaders effective strategies for sharing power with their constituents. Sarason's (1995) treatise *Parental Involvement and the Political Principle* is an excellent reference for conceptually examining the issues underlying collaboration with the multiple constituencies who are concerned about public education. For it is certain that not only do schools need technically competent managers who love their work, their organizations, and the people whose lives they affect; but they also need leaders who are willing to reallocate power and authority among various stakeholders.

The issue of power reallocation is not likely to disappear from the educational arena. Improved principal preparation must address this reality so eloquently stated by Sarason (1995), "Anyone who does not know that schools are...impacted...by the political system also believes in the tooth fairy" (p. 79). Shirley (1997) confirms that school reform cannot take place in a political vacuum, with Murphy (1992) pointing out that power in the right hands will foster school improvement.

Attending to the voices of traditionally silent stakeholder groups, therefore, can only strengthen and enrich university principal preparation programs, better preparing the leaders who are to escort schools into the next century. Ultimately, if the campus principal continues to maintain the posture of being a key determinant of effective practice in each school, the results of this study strongly suggest that future generations of site leaders will

need considerable skill in working effectively with many groups both within and outside the school. In the future, effective school leaders will need to fine-tune their abilities to listen to, not simply hear, many voices.

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